

HEALING BUNKERS

Reinterpretation of The Albanian
Bunkers



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ABSTRACT

The Albanian landscape, all across from its highlands to the coastal areas, has more than half of a century that is being dotted from these small monolithic structures called the bunkers. The bunkers were a construction that came from the time when communist regime was ruling the country, and it was supposedly built to protect the people, from a threat that never actually existed. Expect the fact that the bunkers reflect the paranoia of their ideator, they become a special case of a bunker also in the bigger arena of the defensive architecture built in the world, since it was never really used. The bunker was more a semantic representation of the actuality of the country at that time, small, isolated and ready to protect their country from anyone with the naivety of their scale.

All the history of the past that the bunker as an archetype in the Albanian reality of nowadays carries on its shoulders, makes its future the more and more ambiguous. And simultaneously, their striking existence in hundred thousand copies of each other, in their static, rough and stagnant state cannot be ignored. It resides as a still painting on the landscape, that is seen and interpreted with either appeal and excitement to that part of the population that never really experienced the regime, and with anguish and somehow resentment from the people who actually lived it. This happens since the bunker today is stuck in the middle of a definition of a remain of the past and an artefact of the future, in its hundred's way of perception. The reality although is that it coexists with its past in the present contemporary life and distinguishing its presence might be the means that clarifies its future too.

To achieve this coexistence the bunker is analysed and comprehended as an objet trouve, leading to its reinterpretation as an architectural object made for people and by people. Hauling around with the confusion of reactions it gives to people, the new reinterpretation seeks to help the contemporary man not only to surpass the bunkers mentality somehow, but also give a more pleasant glimpse of verve at the chaotic experience that is life today.

*To my family and loved ones, for
their unconditional love and support,
stronger than the concrete of the
bunkers!*

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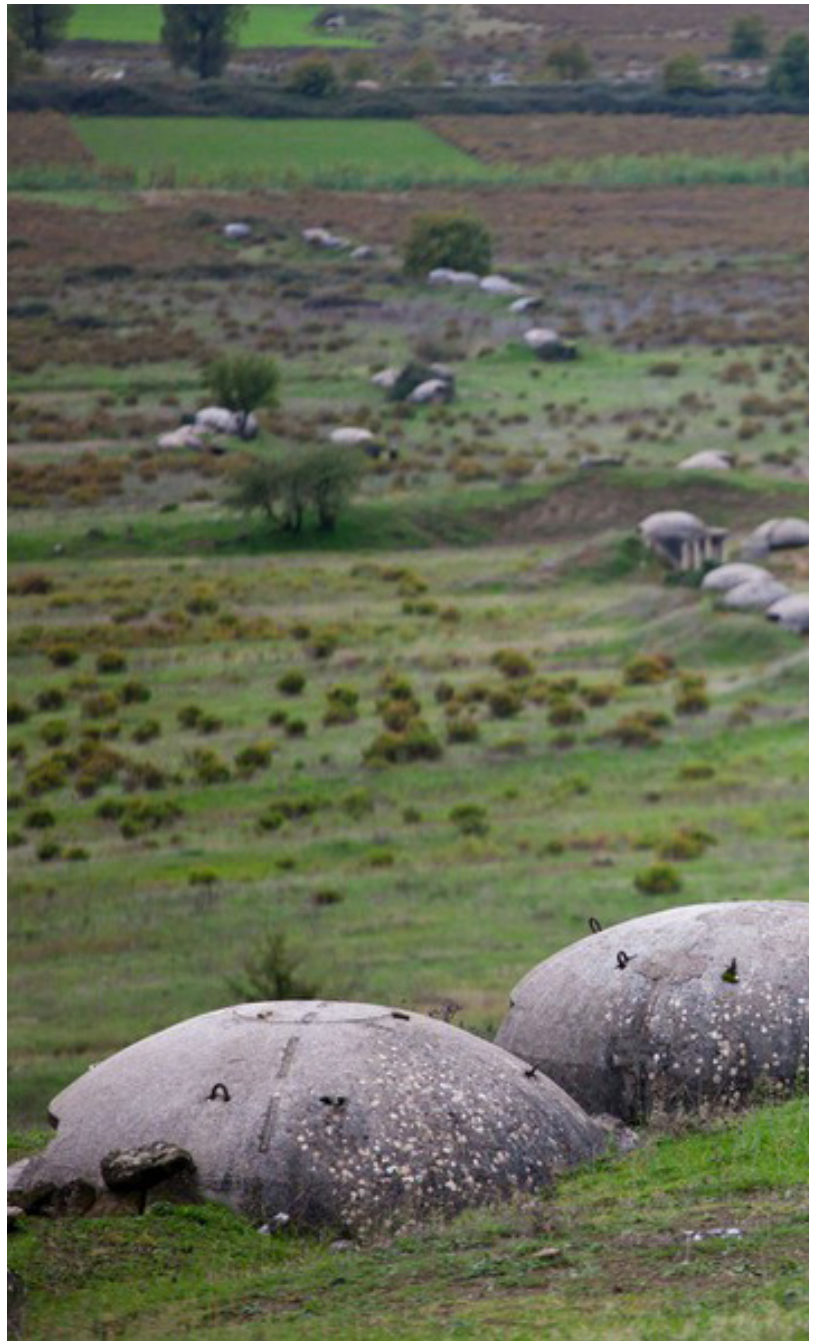


Figure 1. Row of bunkers in the landscape from <https://pam-fleti.net/tag/bunkeret/>

INTRODUCTION

The Albanian Bunker

As a Mediterranean country, Albania is distinguished for its rich and diverse nature with an intense combination of mountains and field and a proximity to the sea along its western border. There came a time that these natural elements of the landscape were joined by a fourth, man-made one: the bunker. As small as it can be in literal physical terms, the bunker, identifies a quite bigger impact in the Albanian territory. They spread around the country during the totalitarian regime, and somehow, with all the context of history they carry, they became an 'iconic' element of the Albanian lands, built to never be used for their purpose, built to signify the satisfaction of a delusional leader. Accompanied with the communist era of the country, and the way they sprouted all over the country immediately as a result of the paranoia of the dictator, they for long symbolized the period from which they came. But after the regime came down, their future was somehow unclear. Their ever-presence and the absurdity of the means that were spent to construct them has split the public opinion into two fractions. With the general nervousness that they cause to the people and the constant reminder of the past, a part of people wants them to get destroyed or disappear from the Albanian landscape. And this is an actual eventuality happening, with a lot of the bunkers getting destroyed by the pass of time or natural destroying agents. While this is happening, the other group of thought is going with the approach to keep the bunkers as a memory, or even reuse them. Popular wisdom, has already emerged in some ways in regards with the bunkers, in the form of informal transformations done to them during the pass of time, like converting a bunker to a restaurant, to a warehouse for aging alcoholic drinks, and even chicken coops or other

typologies of storage.

The real deal with the bunkers of Albania is that they relate to the era they were built only figuratively, since they were never really used. So, their present still is somehow represented by their past, making it difficult to see their future. If there is a future to these structures, it is worth uncovering it, as despite its history the bunker was meant as an object for the people of this country and is still co-existing with them. Maybe the right step to do is acknowledging this coexistence of this past, cast in concrete, to try to altercate the present indifference of its architectural objectivity and built an actual future.

In this thesis the objective is exactly discovering this future, by the reinterpretation of the bunker as an architectural artefact.

Figure 2. Bunker in the mountains of Albania <https://www.euronews.com/2017/09/26/albania-s-communist-bunkers-put-to-new-use>



The most important points to be discussed and the objectives to be achieved are:

1. Understand the present condition of the bunker as an artefact in relation to its past and future.
2. The apprehension of what the bunkers are for, as a physical architectural object, but also in relation to the current population of the country. Rediscovering the idea of the bunkers built for its people.
3. Reinterpret the bunker as a matter of healing from the past, and as an element coexisting with its user in their current contemporary life.





Figure 3. Collage of the dictatorship in Albania,

1. VERGING ON CARELESSNESS

Origin

A question that comes to mind when seeing these small structures popping up everywhere is, how did they come to be? Albania's history is full with wars, invasions and attempts of the people for self-determination and independency. After finally being able to claim its independency in 1912, the country re-entered the war in 1939, and out in front of the Italian invasion and the Second World War happening, it found itself again in political mayhem and uncertainty.¹

In 1944 Albanian territories were mostly controlled by partisans, who had created a provisional government. This brought the elections of December 1945 held by the communist collective with a single list of candidates, followed by the declaration of Albania as a People's Republic (alb. Republikë Popullore) and Enver Hoxha as its prime minister. Through 1948 Albania was in very good relations to Yugoslavia, which is also one of the things that helped the creation of the Communist Party in Albania. Later the relation with Tito were broken, so the country turned to a new ally, the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), an alliance that did not last long either. The cooperation with the Soviet Union was taken over by the People's Republic of China, and Albania became the country's only ally in Communist Eastern Europe. Again, this affinity ended too in 1977.

At this point Enver Hoxha declared Albania a completely isolated country and all the other countries were considered enemies, including previous allies. He declared that Albania would fight against all of them and that the Albanian socialism would dominate among all. Inside the fantasy of Enver Hoxha, his appointed Defence Council

1 Gjeçovi, The War for National Liberation of Albania "Lufta Nacionalçlirimtare Në Shqipëri", 1939-1944.

experts' cries for reason and decided to bunkerize the country – an action which in hindsight is easier to judge: an euphoric and insane initiative for which Albania has paid too much.²

The “Project of Bunkerization” of the country, as mentioned, was not a strategy that came from the military experts of the country, but it was a product of the Defence Council led by the dictator and Mehmet Shehu, another important figure of the Albanian communism. They planned and implemented this whole idea, rising with the propaganda “The defence of the country is the duty over duties” and that whoever disagreed was a traitor of the country.

The degree of inadequacy of the way the bunkers' project was developed is quite high, compared to the concepts of fortification that they were supposed to represent. In an interview military experts Rrahman Parllaku and Edip Ohri, currently chairman and general secretary of the Veteran's Organization respectively, explained how the bunkerization was not implying any protection in case of a supposed attack. Firstly, as a fortification, it did not have to be covering the whole country, but key points where the enemy is expected. Secondly, they were not camouflaged, but sometimes easily observable, that made them unsafe and a helicopter could destroy them immediately. “The bunkers weren't built to defend from outsiders, but to communicate to the people of Albania that everything we do, we do it to defend our people against all. The bunkerization was Enver Hoxha's delirium of glory, combined with the fear of losing power. Hoxha kept repeating that we are protect-

2 Stefa, Concrete Mushrooms: Reusing Albania's 750,000 Abandoned Bunkers.

ing our country from foreigners, making the people feel oppressed and threatened.”³ This only emphasized the ridiculousness of the bunkers and at the same time highlighting the trauma they carry on with their existence for the people that lived during the regime.

Anguish and Propaganda

The bunkers themselves appear, at first glance, brutally efficient for their apparent dumbness.⁴ That could have made their existence quite more subtle, but that is not the case in a closer, more professional look. Military experts were abolished by Enver Hoxha and they were replaced by people with no military culture. The leader’s paranoia was reflected in his propaganda, launching slogans like “Every citizen is a soldier and the army is of the citizens”. Everyone could volunteer, and should, to be part of the army in case of an emergency. There was no discipline, no rules, and this was reflected also in the construction of the bunkers. They proved to be neither efficient nor functional, as they were never used for their actual function. It is true, that there was a reasonable strategy to their placement in

3 Stefa, “Interview with the Generals.”

4 Payne, “Projekti Bunkerizimit: The Strange Case of The Albanian Bunker.”

some cases, like the positioning around the border regions, overlooking mountain passes or as protections in the entrances of cities, towns, and villages, but that was not the aim of protecting Albania from an attack in the first place. As Slavoj Žižek has argued: "...The role of these bunkers was neither real (as a means of military defence they were worthless) nor imaginary (they were certainly not built with the pleasurable experience of those trained to use them in mind), but for purely symbolic reasons: to serve as a sign of Albania's determination to defend itself at all costs."⁵

Even in the case of providing confidence to the Albanian population from an imminent attack, they failed, since a lot of people did not even believe of such a possibility. Likewise, the people involved in the construction of the bunkers, that were connected or selected by the government of the dictator, claim that they were thinking that their contribution was on the advantage of the country. Instead, it is very distinguishable, as their spread across the Albanian landscape, that they became a prevalent reminder of the inefficiencies of Hoxha's regime.

Nowadays, the attitude among the Albanian population about the bunkers is quite tangled and divided, and that comes in variety of reasons related to the bunkers directly, or to the people themselves. The bunker for many people still is the symbol of the total isolation the dictatorship tried to achieve. In an interview with the writers of the book "Concrete Mushrooms", the director of the famous Albanian satire movie "Colonel Bunker" Kujtim Çashku, says: "If we would compare Albania's regime to other kinds of military type totalitarianisms – from Latin America to the

5 Žižek, "Living in the End Times."

Communist Block -, our country was totally unique in conceptualizing its totalitarianism; and if we were able to narrow the bunker in a more semantic form it would exactly be the unique expression of the Albanian totalitarianism.”⁶ It represents a mentality, that for the majority of people that lived through the regime the director calls it the “bunker mentality”, thoughts of doubt in relation to everything happening around them, fear of the outside world and what it was hiding. It was like people were living in this figurative bunker of the mind, while the literal one was under construction, living under the paranoia of a dictator’s delusion. And what makes this ludicrous, it is the fact that it is quite difficult to eradicate this mentality of those people. This was reflected very clearly during the construction of the museum BunkArt 2 in Tirana, the capital city, very near the city centre. This museum was a continuation of the museum BunkArt 1, a representation of the discovery of a nuclear bunker for the dictator, which

6 Stefa, “A Conversation with Kujtim Çashku - The Albanian Film Director Discusses His Film ‘Colonel Bunker.’”



Figure 4. Protests during the construction of BunkArt 2 in Tirana, Helena van der Boon,



Figure 5. Protests during the construction of the entrance of BunkArt 2 in Tirana, *Helena van der Boon*



was quite successful, especially among foreigners visiting the country. But in the contrary of the first one, this new museum was not very well received, and strongest element that brought this argument was the entrance of the museum, that was built to access the underground tunnel system.⁷ The entrance was thought and shaped as a concrete mushroomed bunker. It was meant as an example to show to tourists and foreigners the bunkers that exist all over the country. This provoked upheaval, so much so that a big protest was organised in December 2015.⁸ The reactions ranged from verbal to violent ones, with people attempting to destroy the bunker with hammers and set it on fire. This was clearly a speculation of the loaded subject that the bunkers meant to some people in relation to Albania's past.

On the other hand, there is another common opinion too, around the bunkers. A younger generation identifies with the bunkers now as part of their country and their history. The gap of the conception of the bunkers shows clearly the gap of experiencing of dictatorship among the Albanian people. Most of the people in their 30s and younger have only heard of the regime from their families that have lived it. Advocates say they have grown up with these objects in their landscape (but did not grow up under Hoxha) and would like to keep them, not as cautionary reminders of the past but as the things that make their world unique to them, an attitude similar to the Easter Is-

7 Iacono and Këlliçi, "Of Pyramids and Dictators: Memory, Work and the Significance of Communist Heritage in Post-Socialist Albania."

8 Helena van der Boon, "Bunkers as Contested Cultural Heritage What the Bunkers of Albania Tell about the Processing of a Nation's Communist Memory."

landers' view of their moai statues.⁹ And in a way, the bunkers become a reminder and a point to relate to a past that the country had lived. Also, there are a lot of people from older generations that actually think the bunkers can be reused. For their construction a lot of materials and means were used, and their destruction could not profit economically neither, so there are people that have attempted reusing them or recycling their materials. As David Pike writes in his paper:

*"The bunkers do exert a compelling fascination on the viewer... Today, the bunkers continue to mediate the relationship with outsiders, except that now they stand in for the insurmountable gap in experience born of the country's decades-long isolation. They provide a blank but eloquent testimony to a formative experience unique to the country's inhabitants, and their gradual acceptance suggests that the gap is slowly closing. That many Albanians are aware of visitors' fascination with the unique fact of the bunkers is clear from the makeshift conversions, especially along the seashore, into restaurants and bars catering primarily to foreigners. But it's not just visitors: while it is plausible that tourists might keep a Durrës seaside hamburger joint in business, it's harder to believe that the clientele of Bunkerë, a bar and club built around an artillery bunker in Bilisht, ten kilometers outside of Korça and way off the European tourist path in the country's southeastern corner, consists solely of outsiders. The fantasy of the Hoxha bunkers is in fact composed of a blend of homegrown paranoia and imported forms, and that is the role it continues to play in the country."*¹⁰

9 Payne, "Projekti Bunkerizimit: The Strange Case of The Albanian Bunker."

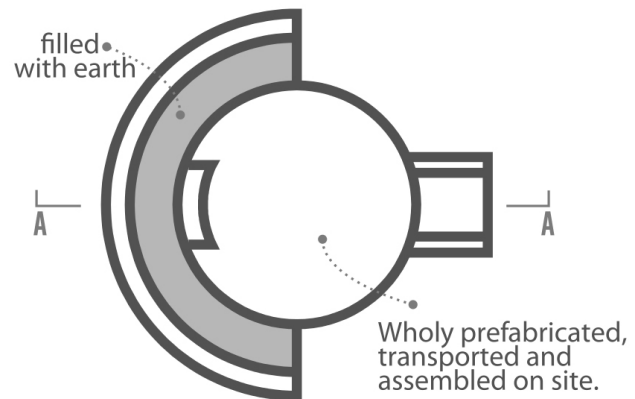
10 Pike, "The Bunkerization of Albania."

The Elephant in the Room

For starters, nobody will ever know exactly how many bunkers were built, since they were never well-documented. According to Enver Hoxha's plan 750,000 bunkers were going to be built, one for every four Albanian inhabitants in the late 1970s. Estimates about the actual number range from around 100,000 to the full three-quarters of a million.¹¹ An estimation by an article from BBC News says that the cost of the bunkers of Albania was twice as much as the cost of the Maginot Line in France. And that is because of the amount of concrete and steel used for tehri reinforcement. In the same article it is mentioned the way they tested the first prototype: "When the prototype bunker was finished in the 1950s he asked the chief engineer how confident he was that it could withstand a full assault from a tank. The answer was, 'Very confident'. The Communist Party supremo then insisted that the engineer stand inside his creation while it was bombarded by a tank."¹² And the bunker resisted. The built bunkers were of three different categories.

11 Pike, "The Bunkerization of Albania."

12 Howden, "BBC NEWS | Europe | Albania's Relics of Paranoid Past."



Small sized bunkers, also known as “Qendra Zjarri”-“Fire Centres” or “Pillboxes”, were originally designed to host only one soldier at a time with his gun, usually being a rifle. They are mainly located along the coasts of the Adriatic and Ionic seas and the borders along the land. The ones located on the coastal areas are sometimes found also in group of three. These bunkers were produced as prefabricated elements with various geometrical shapes, and then they were transported and assembled on site. They consist

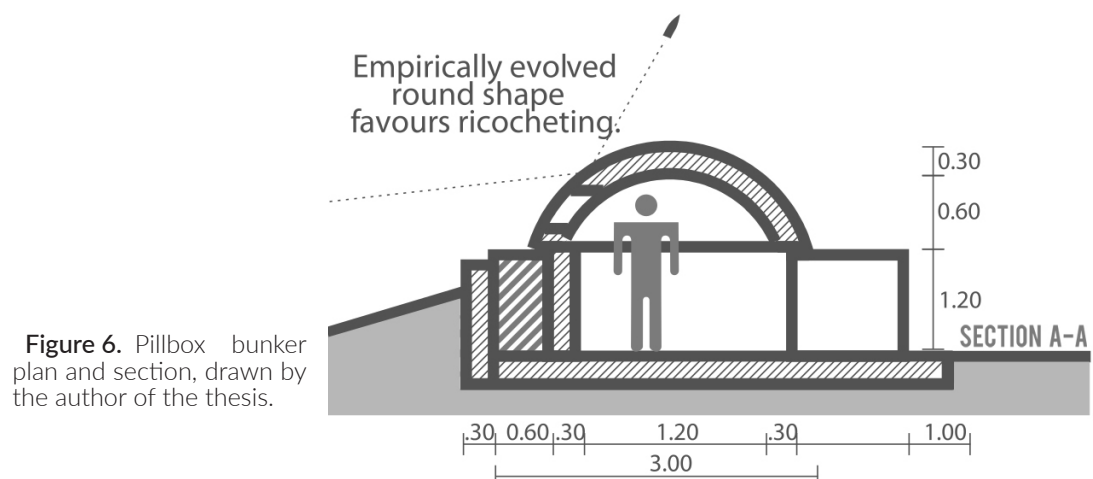
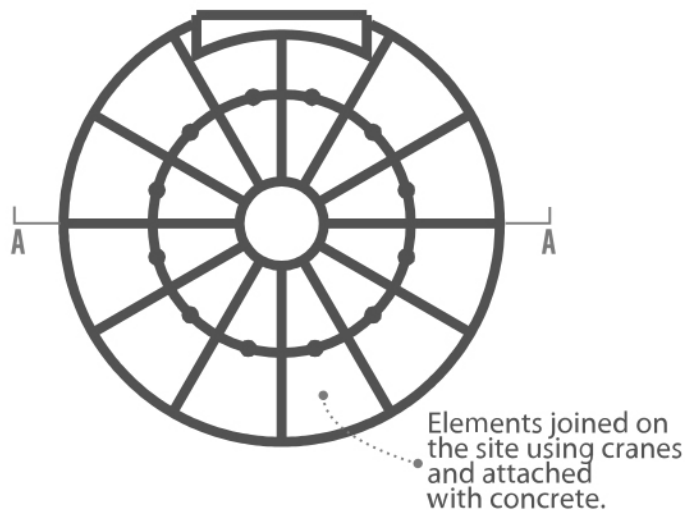


Figure 6. Pillbox bunker plan and section, drawn by the author of the thesis.



of 2.45 meters square area.

Medium sized bunkers, also known as “Pikë Zjarri”-“Fire Points”, were designed to host small artillery or a small group of people. Some of them are bigger in size, in order to be able to host heavy artilleries, armaments or even groups of 10 people or more. They are located throughout the whole territory of Albania. They were too, prefabricated and assembled on site, but were quite bigger and heavier than the first prototype, and their shell was divided in slices. Each of them weighted approximately 8 to 9 tons. That makes the total weight of one of these bunkers vary to 350-450 tons, with a 28.8 meters square area.

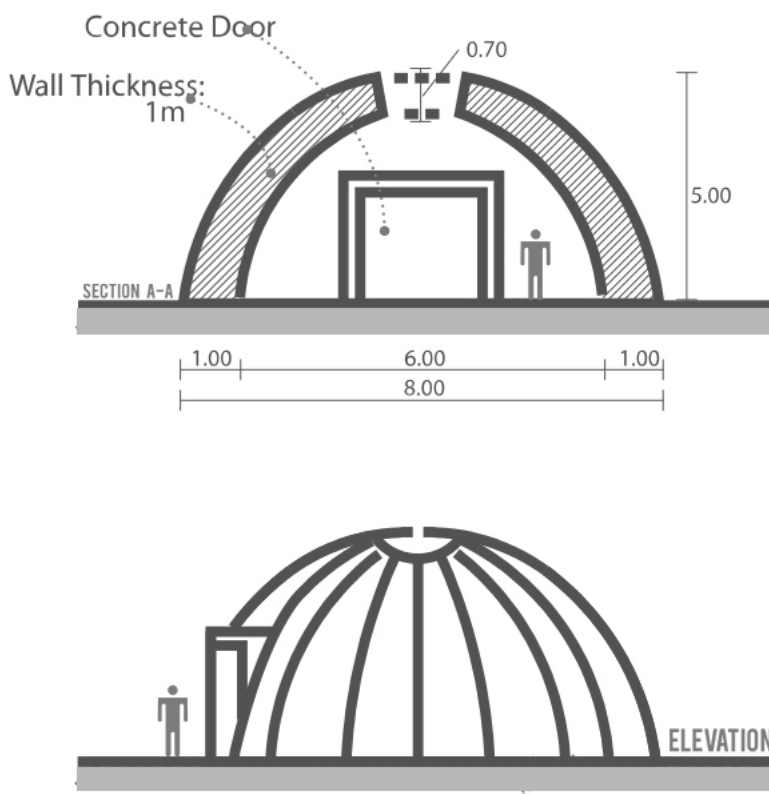


Figure 7. Fire Point Bunker, plan , section and elevation, drawn by the author of thesis.

Figure 8. Pillbox bunker found in the hillsides. https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Bunkers_in_Albania



Figure 9. Fire point bunker found in the hillsides, https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Bunkers_in_Albania



Figure 10. Row of pillbox bunkers found at the coast of Albania, https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Bunkers_in_Albania





Figure 11. Special structure bunkers, https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Bunkers_in_Albania

The special structures consist of the regular and anti-atomic tunnels structures designed and built for various military purposes like bases for submarines, aircrafts, heavy artillery or as protective shelters for the leaders of the country and their families. Usually these structures are well hidden and strategically located for the purposes they were meant. In a lot of cases a lot of them still stay hidden or only known from the state and kept hidden.

This was the initial state of how the bunkers were built and thought. Today, the situation is different. As they stay dotting the landscape, from highlands to the country's coastal areas, and even in urban zones, the present state of the bunkers is different. This comes not only from their location, but also the way they have been perceived through the years and in the same time, because of their enormous number that goes all across the country's territory. Although there are different approaches, there can be distinguished a general classification on the way the bunkers are persisted as a spatial phenomenon.

Figure 12. Row of bunkers at the coast , Bunkers recognized as ruins.

- Bunkers that are recognized as ruins of the past. These are bunkers that have been by the passage of time destroyed from natural factors, and by being totally forgotten



by the people. Perhaps the closest is the depiction of the broken abandoned castle in picturesque theory, which elevates a previously utilitarian instrument of fortification to the status aesthetic object.¹³ This is a typology that attracts a lot of attention especially in an artistic approach, like in the case of the photographer Robert Hackman, where the image of the bunker in the Albanian landscape gives a mixed feeling of curiosity.

- Bunkers that are adapted for reuse from people. This category is especially developed on the coastal areas,

13 Payne, "Projekti Bunkerizimit: The Strange Case of The Albanian Bunker."

Figure 13. Pillbox bunkers at the coast, defined as ruins



Figure 14. Bunker reused from animal sheltering



where people understood the factor of excitement that bunkers carry especially to foreigners and tourists, so they started turning them to cafes, restaurants, bed and breakfast or other commercial businesses. In these cases, the bunker is always associated with a backstory to make it even more appealing to the consumer, becoming this sort of lemons-to-lemonade apologia that is expected of the reuse of abandoned archetype. As commercialization too, this has been taken quite far, turning the bunkers in every types of souvenirs from keychains to t-shirts.

- Bunkers that are commemorated and monumentalized, especially in the form of museums. In this case, like the one of BunkArt 1 and 2, the bunker is interpreted as kind of a self-reflective paradigm, telling its own story in return of a payment.

Both these last two categories are pretty much oriented to an outsider, to a foreign user to reflect and raise a different kind of excitement and curiosity. Bunkers turned to museums do explain themselves as a paradigm, but only in a historical term, of what they represent and bring from the past. In this scenario the present of the bunker is stuck at the point of the past and its contemporary future is almost inexistent. Another aspect is the target group, which in a lot of cases is not even considering the current population of the country as a user of the bunkers. If there is a future to these structures, it is worth uncovering it, as despite its history the bunker was meant as an object for the people of this country and is still coexisting with them. Maybe the right step to do is acknowledging this coexistence of this past, cast in concrete, to try to altercate the present indifference of its architectural objectivity and built an actual future.



Figure 15. Reused Bunker at the beach, as a bar and restaurant, <https://www.robhackman.com/Bunker%20Albania/Infantry%20Bunkers/>

Figure 16. Reused bunker as a burger place, <https://www.robhackman.com/Bunker%20Albania/Infantry%20Bunkers/>





Figure 17. Map of defensive walls built in Europe, drawn by the author of thesis

2. APPROACHING THE BUNKER

The Albanian bunker even though quite different in a lot of aspects, is one case in the larger context of the European theatre of war and its resulting defensive projects. And as part of it, it shares some of the most basic characteristics of bunkers built anywhere else like the reinforced concrete construction, the rounded surfaces, the small openings, and so on. In his book "Bunker Archaeology", Paul Virilio defines the bunker (mainly the European bunker in general, and the Atlantic Wall then more specifically), as this architectural archetype as more or less homogeneous across regional or national specificities: "This homogeneity, this monolithic character, is useful for us in being able to reveal several factors at work in modern warfare."¹⁴

14 Virilio, Bunker Archeology.

Bunker Archeology and the modernist bunker

In the field of studying the bunker, the first theoretical reference and artistic forerunner for such an exploration of post war architecture is Paul Virilio's 1975 Bunker Archeology. In this book, Virilio makes a case for the bunker as an utterly modernist structure, as a forerunner to the Brutalist architecture that was popular across Europe between 1953 and 1967. He first became aware of the bunkers that were located along the so-called Atlantic Wall during the summer of 1958, and he spent part of the 1960s and early 1970s traveling to these sites and photographing them. He describes his initial motivation about this project was solely archaeological since he wished to uncover these grey forms and discover part of their mystery. These secret messages have as much to do with the present and the future as with the past, because the bunker is both a remnant but at the same time, an anticipation. Their concrete structure and defensive function materialize their past, but they also confirm their present.

"The bunker has become a myth, present and absent at the same time: present as an object of disgust instead of a transparent and open civilian architecture, absent insofar as the essence of the new fortress is elsewhere, underfoot, invisible from here on in... The poetry of the bunker is in it still being a shield for its users, in the end as outdated as an infant's rebuilt armor, an empty shell, an emotionally moving phantom of an old-fashioned duel in which the adversaries could still look each other in the eye through the narrow slits of their helmets."¹⁵

Figure 18. Bunker part of the Atlantic Wall, photographed by Paul Virilio

¹⁵ Virilio, Bunker Archeology.



Virilio had always claimed his strong compassion towards the bunkers and his appeal to them as something so suffocating but at the same time so fascinating.

What made the bunkers so appealing according to him, was not only the monstrous amount of concrete used, but the time frame they existed, that made them have that kind of structures. It is not the object exactly, but the concepts it associates with and what it expresses. He accepted in several interviews and in his book that the bunker has its expressionist side, but not voluntarily. It is the space and time it was built in that made it express the terror it did to so many people. Thus, the bunker being so heavy, so terrifying and fascinating at the same time, made it the inverse figure of the destructive power of the twentieth century. And that is why, in so many cases the bunker according to Virilio is the symbol of the 20th century. Why continue being surprised from the forms of the modernist architecture of Le Corbusier, or even the whole Brutalist architecture? The bunker might be the answer.

There are numerous turnarounds in the architecture of Le Corbusier, and the presence of expressionist elements in his work through years, and that relates this idol of modernity to quite well to the bunker. The use of rough untreated concrete and the visibility of raw materials, for example in the Jaoul House during the fifties or in the La Tourette monastery in Eveux, near Lyons, in 1960. Especially in the case of La Tourette, there are clearly some features of a submarine. The scale of La Tourette compared to that of the bunker might come surprising in such a case, but they do also share this monumentality of modernist architecture. And at the same time a quite brutal stature. In a lot of cases the



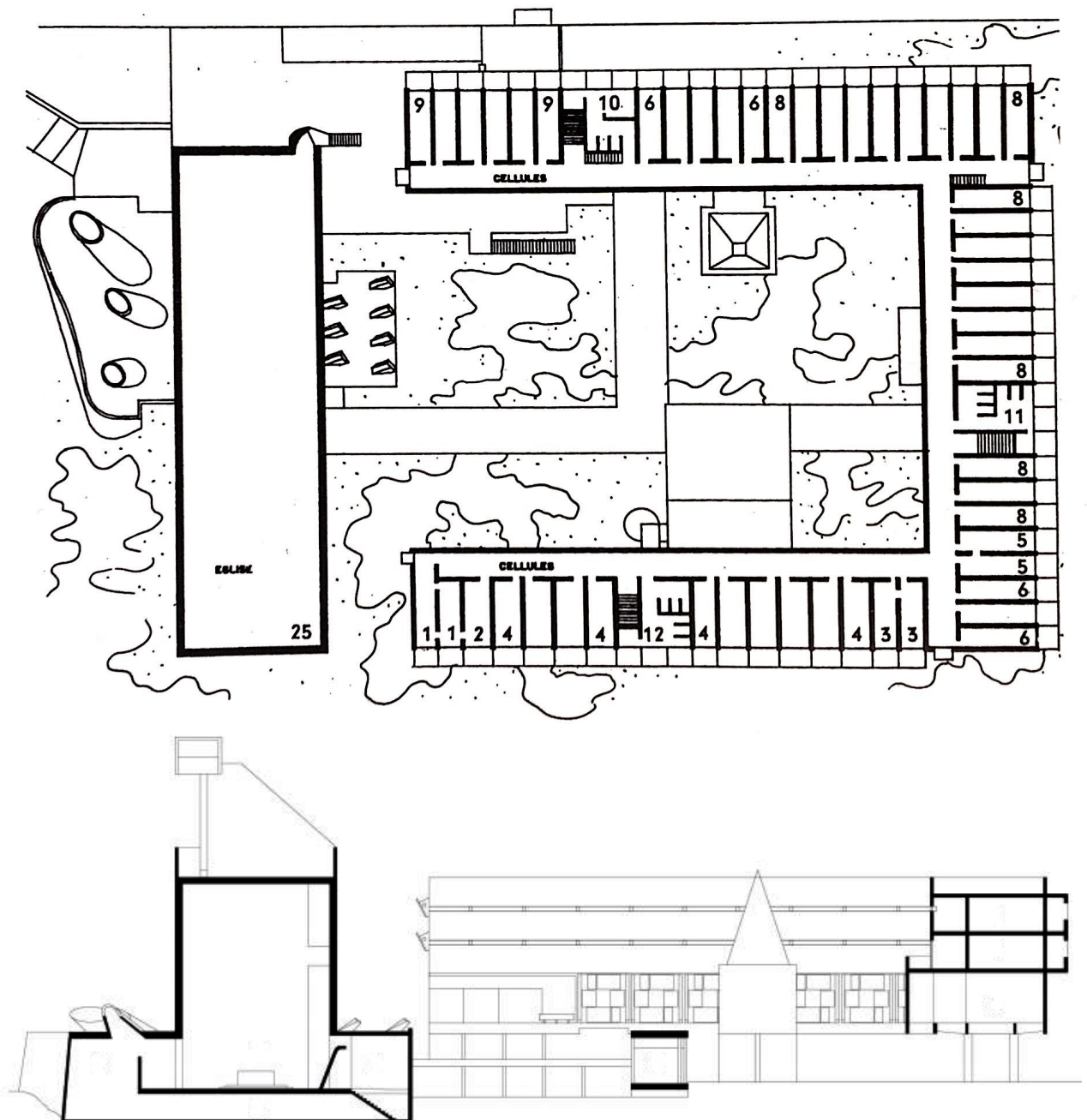
Figure 19. Sainte Marie de La Tourette Convent by Le Corbusier, <https://archeyes.com/sainte-marie-de-la-tourette-le-corbusier/>

Figure 20. Bunker part of the Atlantic Wall, photographed by Paul Virilio



Figure 21. Plan and section of Sainte Marie de La Tourette Convent by Le Corbusier, <https://archeyes.com/sainte-marie-de-la-tourette-le-corbusier/>

architecture has the tendency to be called “beautiful”, but not everything with an appealing display is architecture and not all architecture has to be appealing in such a manner. There is no desire to please with prettiness or even beauty. Jonathan Meades in his movie documentary “Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry” is vexed by those who say buildings should be pretty, consoling, unthreatening. Paintings, novels or films are not expected to be pretty so why should buildings? Sometimes according to him, nightmares are more captivating than sweet dreams,



and way more memorable.¹⁶ The scale of La Tourette as a monastery and its material roughness, compared to that of the small bunker with even thicker concrete walls, lying on the middle of an open horizon sandy beach. The reaction stipulated is that of an awe. The quality that the greatest brutalist and modernist buildings manifest is sublimity.

Also, another modernist emblem, Erich Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower has a quite dynamic form, approaching and relating Mendelsohn to the bunker for other reasons. If there is a historical connection to be found in here that it

16 Meades, "Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry."

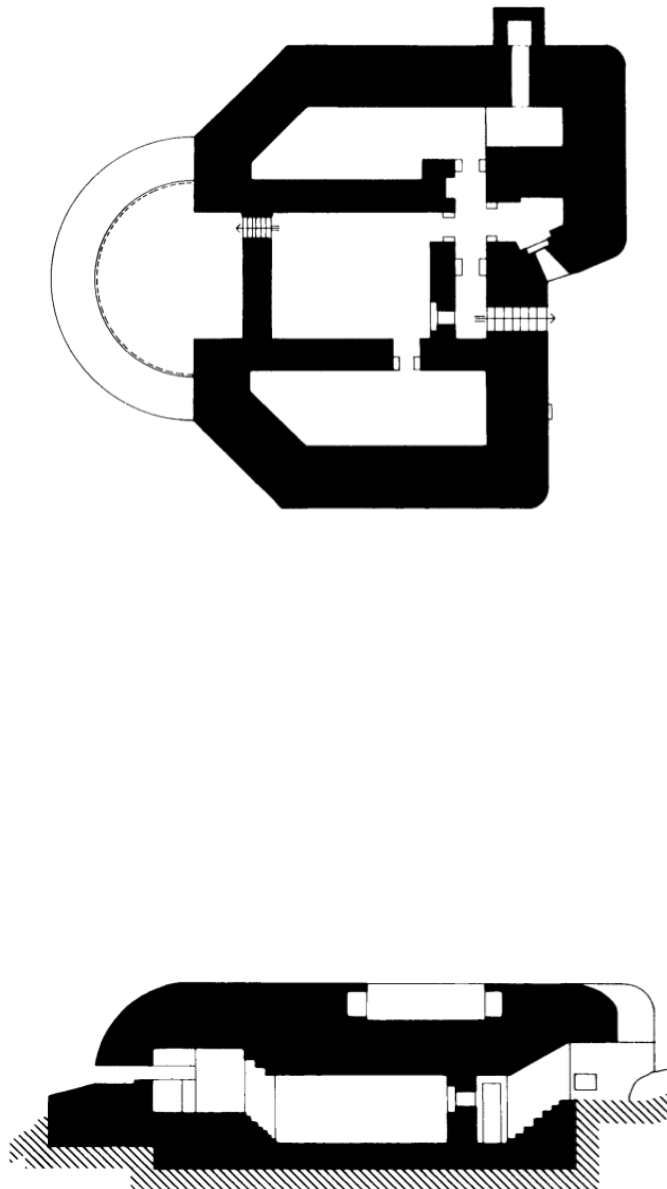


Figure 22. Plan and section of bunker of the Atlantic Wall, drawn by Paul Virilio

is with expressionism and dynamism. And these are definitely two features that they share with the bunkers, since the form of the bunker must be aerostatic. The bunkers are heavy in mass and they have a bombshell shape, so when a bomb falls, it doesn't explode, but instead it ricochets. As Virilio says in an interview: "They put sand all around, and the bomb buries itself in it. Other bunkers have rounded angles, and the shell will slide off. This relation to fluidity is what interests me. It's a little like a smooth pebble, except that here it is a premature wearing down to prevent the surface from stopping the bomb. Nothing to do originally

Figure 23. Bunker part of the Atlantic Wall, photographed by Paul Virilio

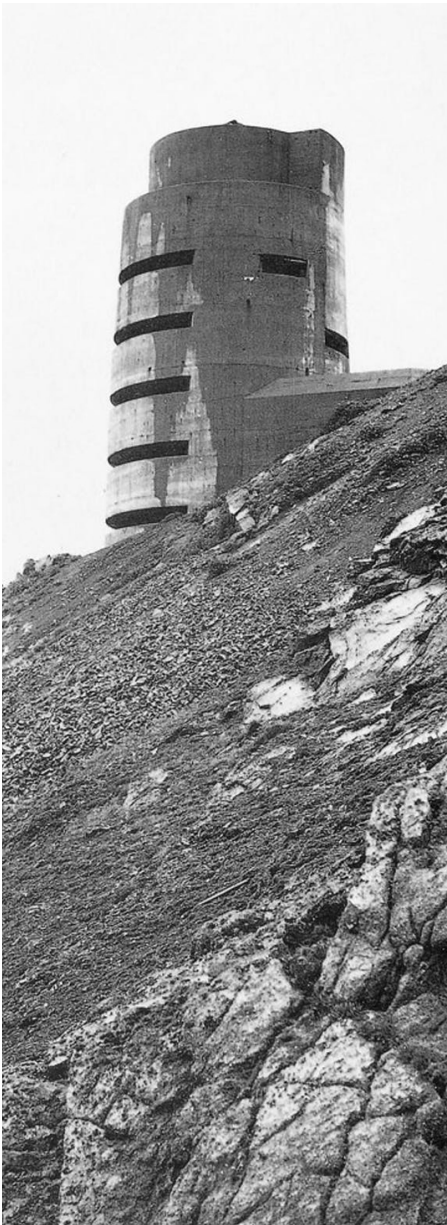
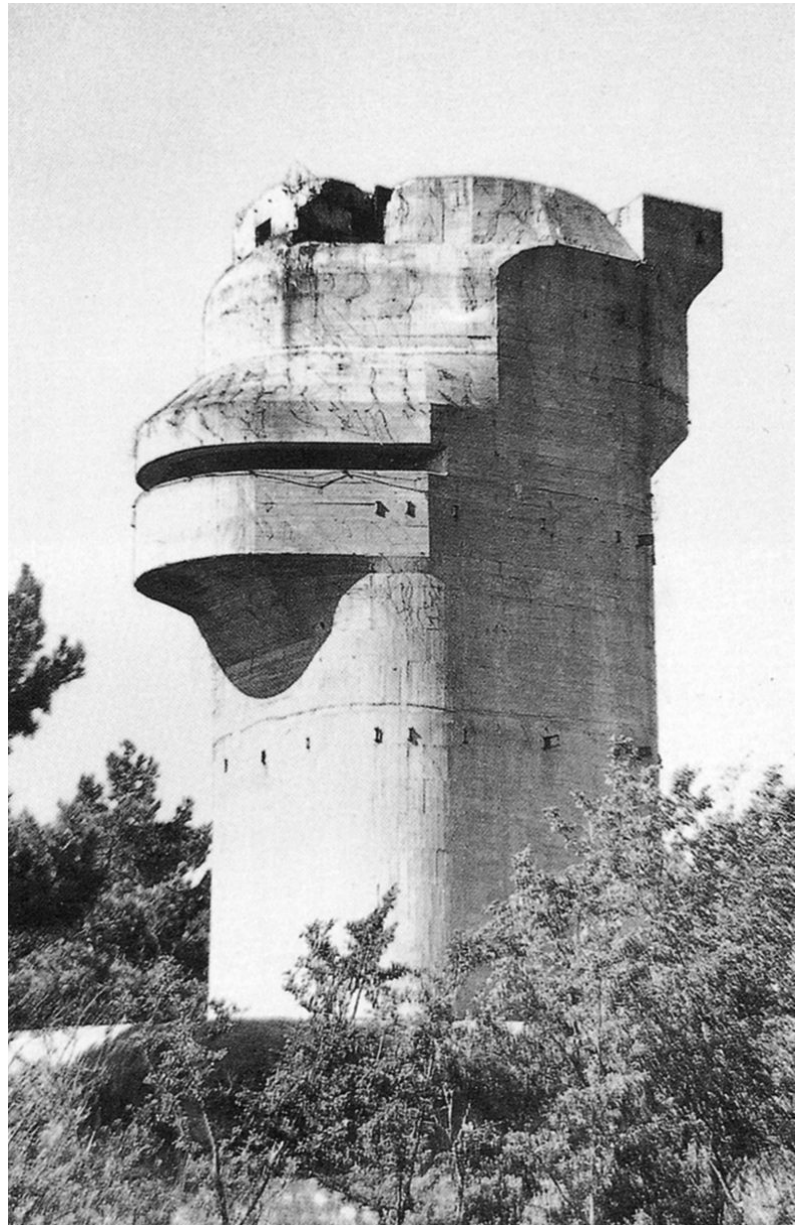


Figure 24. Bunker part of the Atlantic Wall, photographed by Paul Virilio



with the history of modern architecture.”¹⁷ That in a very consistent kind of way, brings up a question and an answer at the same time. The answer would be, that bunkers are definitely a commencement and an influence, even if it is considered as a trend or as an architectural archetype indicating features and futures. Since bunkers were seen as a result of war and as a presence that came from war, but did they have a previous genesis?

17 Virilio, Lotringer, and Taormina, “After Architecture: A Conversation.”

Figure 25. Einstein Toer, by Erich Mendelson, <https://www.archdaily.com/402033/ad-classics-the-einstein-tower-erich-mendelsohn>



Concrete Metaphors: Between Life and Death

The bunker is more than a symbol, it is a metaphor of superpower standoff, it is also a bulky and brute as an element that blisters with the senses of its visitor and them to contort their bodies in order to navigate its surfaces and go through it. Often the properties of bunker's materiality have shaped its subsequent life and even its life span sometimes, and framed the strange, unsettling emotive qualities of encountering with them as relics of the past. This vigilance to the bunker's material-perceptive agency presents something of the vibrancy ascribed to matter by Jane Bennet, but the human is not submerged in this collection's attentiveness to materiality, for to dislocate the bunker from its human origins would be to lose something rather than to gain it.¹⁸ The bunker was made by people, and for people. It was a testimony to the wars going on to the respective countries building them and mankind's death drive. The strange feeling that sometimes emerges within these places is to a large degree a conditioned reaction, but also sometimes very naive.

There is an emotive and dark kind of dimension here: one that both attracts and withstands due to the ontological instability of the bunker as a place that seeks to hold off death, a place where the denizen lives moments and inches away from entombment; the sudden paradigmatic shift of the bunker from shelter to grave. To explore and investigate this side of the bunker, there can be started from the

18 Bennett, *In the Ruins of the Cold War Bunker: Affect, Materiality and Meaning Making*.

broadly gothic tropes, and at the same time its symbolic and material similarity to earlier dark archetypes: the “under world”, the “labyrinth”, “the cave”, “the crypt” and “the tomb”. In their material form such places confine or channel movement and action within them. There is a certain relation to these earlier described forms and a close proximity to the bunker shelter-like character, life and death. It is true the defensive character of it cannot be denied, but at the end what it tries to protect, and sublime is life. It is so close to the death threat but at the same time the anguish and hope for life lie right there at the same level.

This critical point of view covers several key and enduring baroque fingerprints. In the aspects of baroque style, a very important element is reading the cause of the spectator’s anxiety before the baroque façade and that underlines an apprehension of the power of the artwork which the baroque, at this stage of its conception, places to the foreground. This feeling of anxiousness can also be understood as a form of extreme enjoyment, relating to also the different modern and postmodern theories of the sublime.¹⁹ The obsession of baroque with death and intensity, among much else, surface the strong connection to life at the same time and the excitement this life should appeal.. In the paintings of Caravaggio or Rembrandt the interest of them in drama is materialized as the

19 Kaup, “The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture (Review).”





intense contrasts between beaming light and looming shadows are very strong and visible. The dynamism of the gesture in the art itself, the swirling silhouettes, twisted contours, create a dynamism quite similar to the one felt and explained by Virilio in the bunkers. Though in the bunkers' case the extravagance of baroque is way more simplistic in the first look, its materiality, simplicity, monstrosity and connection and disconnection to life, bring this preposterousness that makes them at the same time so appealing.

Figure 26. Caravaggio, "The Calling of Saint Matthew"

Coming back to Paul Virilio, his affection to the bunker was not manifested only in the shape of studying and documenting in books and articles, but his reflections were also shaped in architectural forms. This was a collaboration between Claude Parent and Virilio at the end of 1968.

This church is characterized by a dramatic exterior, materializes the coincidence of two streams of research, the bunker study of his “Bunker Archeology” book of Paul Virilio (1958-1975) and Claude Parent’s research on “Oblique Function”, a modern exploration of the break and slope. The church echoes the formal vocabulary of the bunker, in its heavy walls structure, also the massive and blind rough concrete materiality with room for small openings, with thick and rounded corners and overhangs is done. As Virilio has explained through his study of bunker’s materiality and monolithic structure, he finds in them a strong connection to precedent forms. The bunkers, these “concrete altars built against the ocean void,” can be also found also in the funeral architecture Etruscan tombs and Egyptian



Figure 27. Bunker of the Atlantic Wall, drawn by Paul Virilio

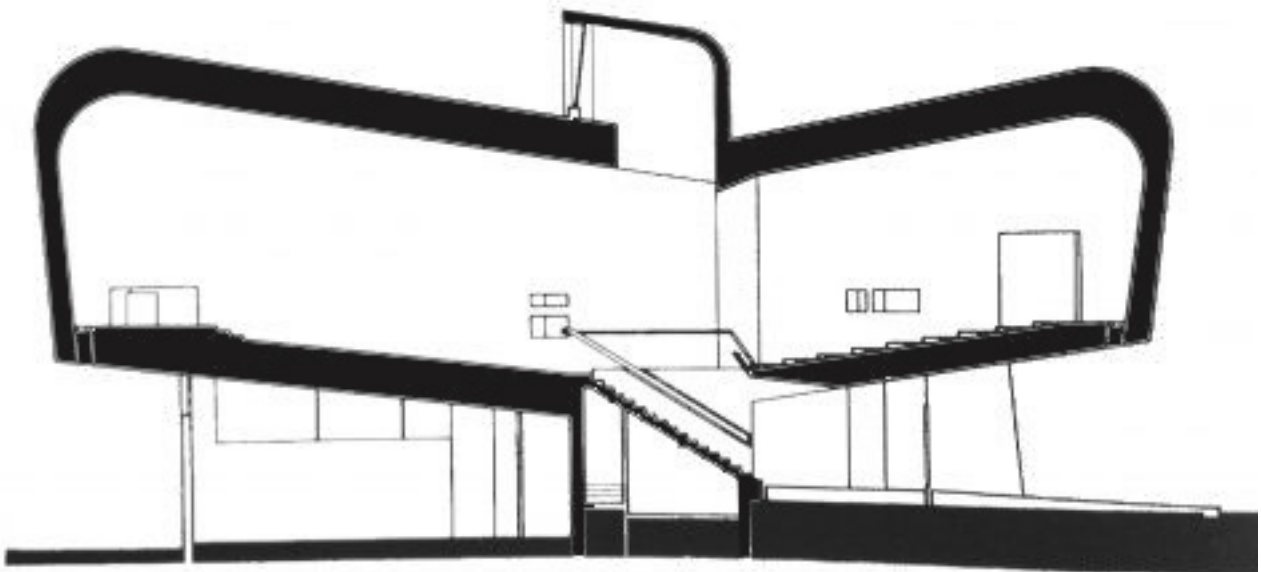


Figure 28. Church of St. Bernadette in Banlay, section, designed by Paul Virilio

Figure 29. Pillbox Albanian bunker



Figure 30. Egyptian mastaba



mastabas.²⁰

Both these stagnant structures are considered in quite a spiritual way a shelter. St. Bernadette Church is a sacred space in which the military language is set as a paradox: the bunker like vocabulary as a figure of oppression and protection; the cave like structure, that is understood as an incarnation of the origin of humanity, but also the

20 Church of St. Bernadette in Banlay - Data, Photos & Plans - WikiArquitectura."

Figure 31. Etruscan tomb

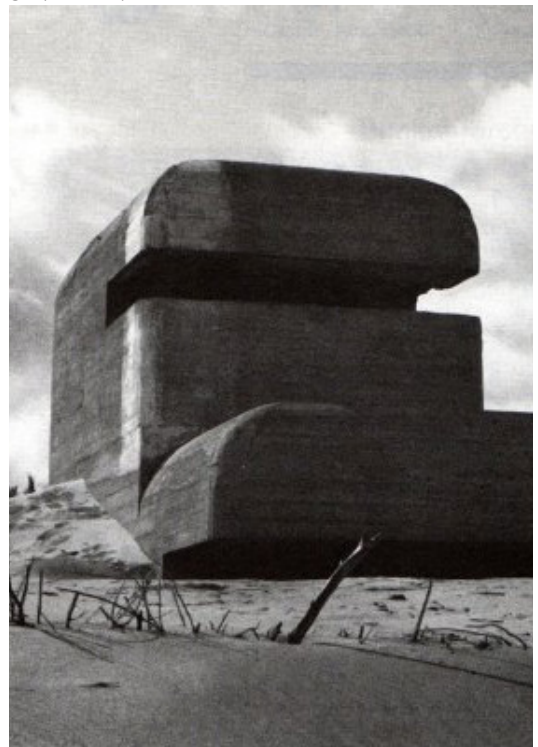


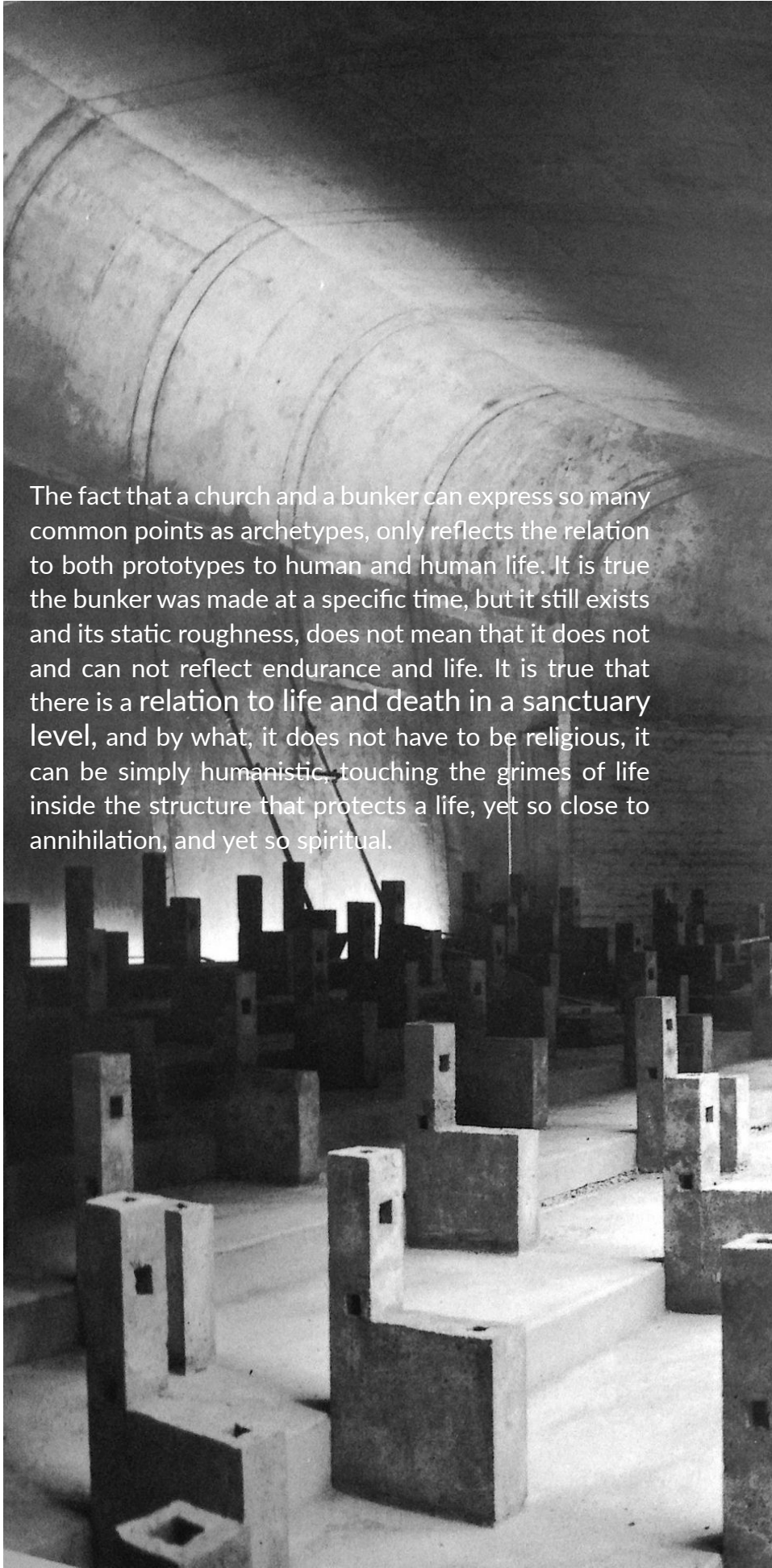
grave, the Church as a symbol of introspection and ascension into the light. Claude Parent and Paul Virilio wanted the church to reflect and offer protection at any time, despite what could happen to the area later in time. The poeticized immobile and static wait of the bunker structure remarked the anthropomorphic character of these capsized silhouettes. And at the same way the small openings give to the entering light this symbol of introspection and od ascension, making the contrast of life and death, sacred.

Figure 32. Church of St. Bernadette, designed by P. Virilio



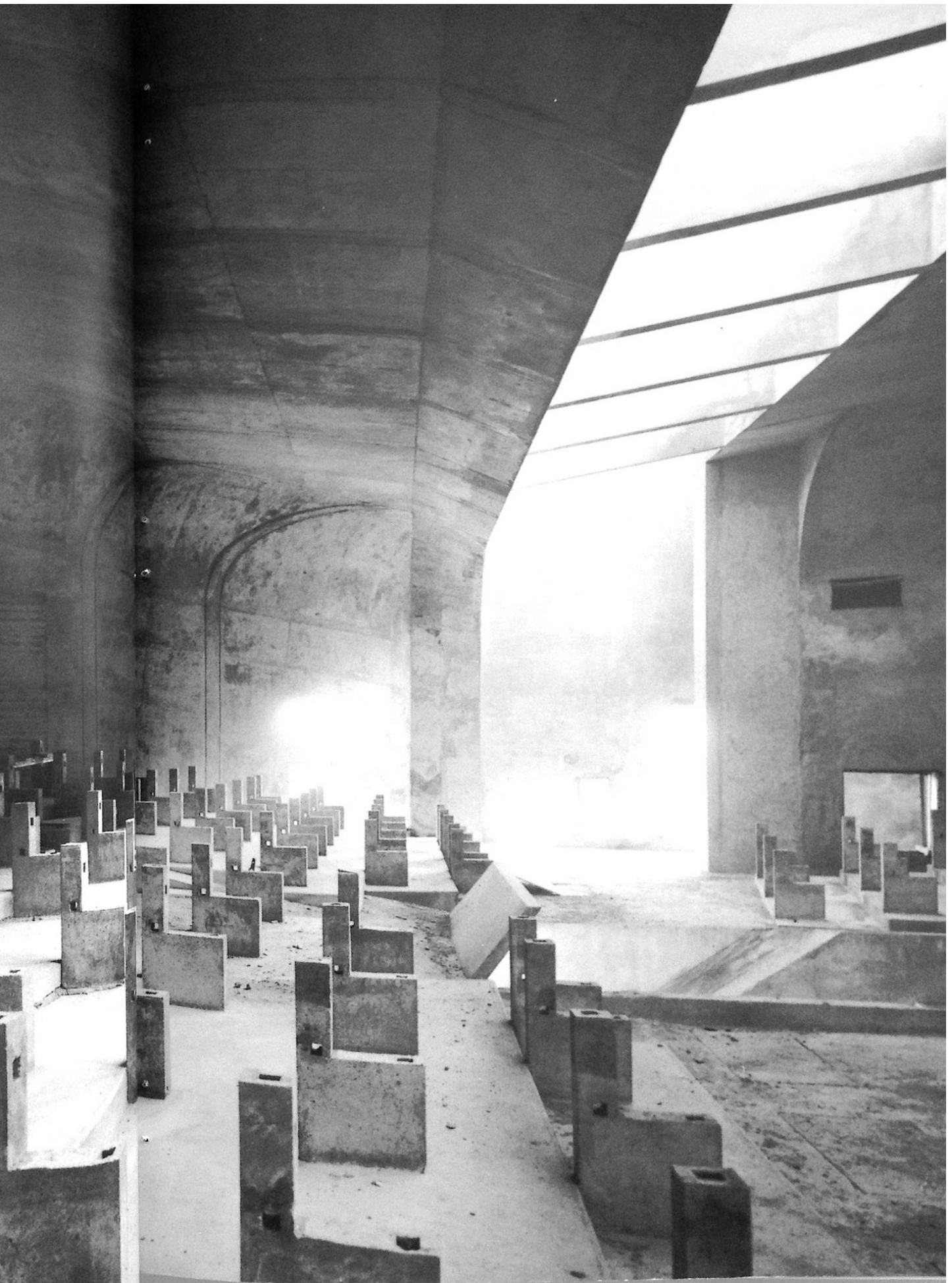
Figure 33. Bunker of the Atlantic Wall, photographed by Virilio





The fact that a church and a bunker can express so many common points as archetypes, only reflects the relation to both prototypes to human and human life. It is true the bunker was made at a specific time, but it still exists and its static roughness, does not mean that it does not and can not reflect endurance and life. It is true that there is a relation to life and death in a sanctuary level, and by what, it does not have to be religious, it can be simply humanistic, touching the grimes of life inside the structure that protects a life, yet so close to annihilation, and yet so spiritual.

Figure 34. Church of St. Bernadette, designed by Virilio, interior



3. BUNKER AS OBJET TROUVÉ

The Origin of The Work of Art

A question that is crucial to be discussed and understood in the study of the bunker, and especially the Albanian bunker, is its interpretation, not only as an archetype of the past but also as a paradigm in the present. Martin Heidegger in his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art”, unravels a quite complex discussion on the nature of various kinds of ‘objects’ including how people interact with them in their everyday life and how sometimes, it is caused for them to be seen differently and their meanings in new ways. He considers as an example, an ordinary “equipmental”²¹ object, a pair of common peasant shoes. However, he does not mention just any pair of shoes, but the ones painted by Van Gogh (Figure). If there was a simple description for the shoes, that would say that they are made of leather and jointed by thread. But in this narrative’s case, what is described is merely their physical appearance and not their true nature. To have a better understanding in this direction the question should not be ‘what the shoes are made of’, but ‘what are the shoes for’. Heidegger describes their intended purpose by relying on their physical qualities, by saying:

“From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stands forth. In the stiffly solid heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform form of the field, swept by a raw wind. On the leather there lies the dampness and saturation of the soil. Under the soles

21 Heidegger, Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964).



Figure 35. Peasant shoes, by Vincent Van Gogh



Figure 36. Albanian bunker on a cliff

*there slides the loneliness of the field-path as the evening declines. In the shoes there wholes the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of ripening corn and its enigmatic self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety about the certainty of bread, the word-less joy of having once more withstood want, the 'rambling before the advent of birth and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging, the equipment itself rises to its resting-in-itself.'*²²

It is clear to say that the shoes are beyond the everyday object they physically represent. They ensure the very presence of the peasant himself. Later on, on his explanation, Heidegger then makes the differentiation between an actual pair of shoes and the ones captured by Van Gogh, identifying his painting as the medium for communicating their true nature. The truth about the essence of the peasant shoes is acknowledged through the work of art. It appears that the work of art discloses, in its own way, the being of what is. In the painting - the artwork, the truth of that which is, has set itself into work. The artist through his work opens a new perspective about a familiar object, discovering an unfamiliar prospect and attitude towards it, and revealing 'the truth of what is' in a framed artistic arrangement. Getting back to the bunkers, framed

22 Heidegger, Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964).

through art, they have the potential to reveal a greater meaning than just remains of Enver Hoxha's regime and also in the larger context of the country's post-communist identity. They can show being beyond mere monolithic masses dotted through the Albanian landscape and show they can mean more than just the trauma and symbol of the paranoia of a dictator leader. They can focus on their more humanistic side, their connection to life, their true meaning being built by the people for the people of the country. Instead of being a concrete burden, that can be found while walking on the beach coast, it can be a space for healing, for the life to continue, for them to bring life and life to be brought to them. Art can be the apparatus which unveils their true nature and their on-going capacity for having a new meaning, to the locals. Simply by asking 'what the bunkers are for', can lead to many different answers and the medium of art as a humanistic approach can shed light on some of the issues with the bunkers, leading to a better understanding of them coexisting in the Albania of today.

Bunkers interpreted as objet trouvé

The manner in which military spaces like bunkers are reused, reinterpreted and re-enacted among a lot of examples can be seen corresponding to the art practices of readymades, a term about found objects with their connotations of mass production and surreal and incendiary undertones. Readymade objects are ordinary object manufactured to have a regular, quite random, non-artistic function that later the artist selects and modifies to give it a completely new meaning. As embodied by the first ever exhibited readymade, Marcel Duchamp's urinal, by simply choosing the object and repositioning or joining, tilting, and signing it, the object becomes art with a new meaning to its nature. The earliest definition was formulated in the theorist André Breton's surrealist dictionary in 1938: 'an ordinary object elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist. Breton also categorized the readymade as an objet trouvé (found object) which has become a more general term for techniques such as readymades, assemblages, collage and trash art.²³

Furthermore, there are different typologies of readymades or objet trouvés: the 'un-altered' which are stripped of their real meaning when placed in a new context (like Duchamp's Fountain) and the 'assisted' when they are more elaborated with mixed objects (like Picasso's Head of Bull).²⁴ The first readymade art was a gesture designed to give the feeling of shock to the viewer. This subversive undertone of a readymade object and 'found objects' is also sim-

23 Strömberg, "Funky Bunkers. The Post-Military Landscape as a Readymade Space and a Cultural Playground."

24 Duchamp, "Apropos of 'Readymades.'"



Figure 37. Fountain, by Marcel Duchamp, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marcel_Duchamp,_1917,_Fountain,_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg

ilar to the principle of the bricolage, a term originating from the French word *bricoleur*: a person who makes creative and resourceful use of whatever materials are at hand regardless of their original purpose.²⁵

Later in time, the meaning of bricolage became a popular theoretical model in cultural studies to describe the processes by which people acquire objects from across social divisions to create new cultural identities. For example, in Dick Hebdige's book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* he explores the expressionism of a style like punk, and uses the example of the element of the safety pin, used as a fashion object to decorate the ears or noses at the time. The functional first meaning of the pin in this case was disrupted and reintroduced as an act of bricolage by commotion and deformation. As the Dadaist Max Ernst said, the 'bricoleur' juxtaposes two apparently incompatible realities on an apparently unsuitable scale to produce an 'explosive junction'.²⁶

These practices of appropriation were meant to disconnect the object from the initial meanings, which in the most of the cases was a mass produced oriented, meaning one among many. In the case of the bunker the similarity of the situation is quite visible. The Albanian bunker as a number was meant to be 750.000, even though it never was proved that all were built, and the way they were produced, in a mass series of and on-site assemblage way. But

25 Strömberg, "Funky Bunkers. The Post-Military Landscape as a Ready-made Space and a Cultural Playground."

26 Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and His Friends*.



Figure 38. Head of Bull
by Picasso



Figure 39. Albanian pill-
box bunker, used as a plant
pot, photographed by the
author of the thesis

seeing the bunker as a found object (*objet trouve*), can help giving it and its space a different new meaning. The etymological leap from Duchamp's readymade to the notion of 'readymade space' as in the example of the bunker, is achieved by indicating their functional, aesthetic and cultural correspondences. Going back to the analysis of the Albanian bunker, it was made for people by people, so the new meaning should reflect this. In a lot of case studies of other bunkers' reinterpretations the new meaning as a readymade may have been artistic or more user oriented, but the idea is the new found meaning in the object.

Case Studies

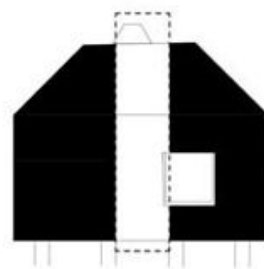
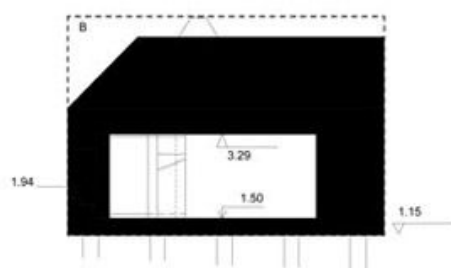
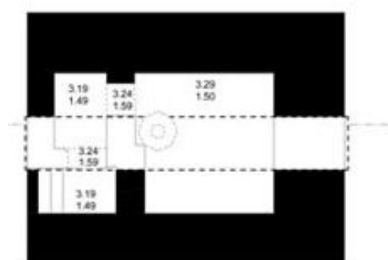
Bunker 599 by RAAAF + atelier de lyon

'Bunker 599' by dutch firms atelier de lyon and RAAAF is a project which lays bare two secrets of the new dutch waterline (NDW), a military line of defense in use from 1815 until 1940 protecting the cities of muiden, utrecht, vreeswijk and gorinchem by means of intentional flooding. a seemingly indestructible bunker with monumental status is sliced open. the design thereby opens up the minuscule interior of one of ndw's 700 bunkers, the insides of which are normally cut off from view completely. in addition, a long wooden boardwalk cuts through the extremely heavy construction. it leads visitors to a flooded area and to the footpaths of the adjacent natural reserve. the pier and the piles supporting it remind them that the water surrounding them is not caused by e.g. the removal of sand but rather is a shallow water plain characteristic of the inundations in times of war.²⁷ The power of the bunker here and its monolithic structure has been turned to a readymade object by this small intervention to show that there is more to the thick and rough concrete walls of this structure. At the same time its presence in the nature, its proximity and distance simultaneously is emphasized by the division of the structure in the middle, giving a metaphorical power back to the nature and people themselves.

27 "RAAAF + Atelier de Lyon: Bunker 599."



Figure 40. Bunker 599, by RAAF atelier, plans, sections and view





B018 by Bernard Khoury

B018 is a music club, a place of nocturnal survival. In the early months of 1998, the B018 moved to the “Quarantaine”, on a site that was better known for its macabre aura. During the French protectorate, it was a place of quarantine for arriving crews. In the recent war it became the abode of Palestinian, Kurdish and South Lebanese refugees (20,000 in 1975). In January 1976, local militia men launched a radical attack that completely wiped out the area. The slums were demolished along with the kilometer-long bordering wall that isolated the zone from the city. A lot of years later, the scars of war are still perceptible through the disparity between the urban fabric of the area and the densely populated neighborhoods.²⁸

The B018 project is, first of all, a reaction to difficult and explosive conditions that had characterized the history of its location and the contradictions that are implied by the implementation of an entertainment program on such a site. B018 refuses to participate in the naïve amnesia that governs the post-war reconstruction efforts.

The project is built below ground. Its façade is pressed into the ground to avoid the over exposure of a mass that could act as a rhetorical monument. The building is embedded in a circular concrete disc slightly above tarmac level. At rest, it is almost invisible. It comes to life in the late hours of the night when its articulated heavy metal roof structure retracts hydraulically. The opening of the roof exposes the club to the world above and reveals the cityscape as an urban backdrop to the patrons below. Its closing translates a voluntary disappearance, a gesture of recess.

28 “Bernard Khoury.”

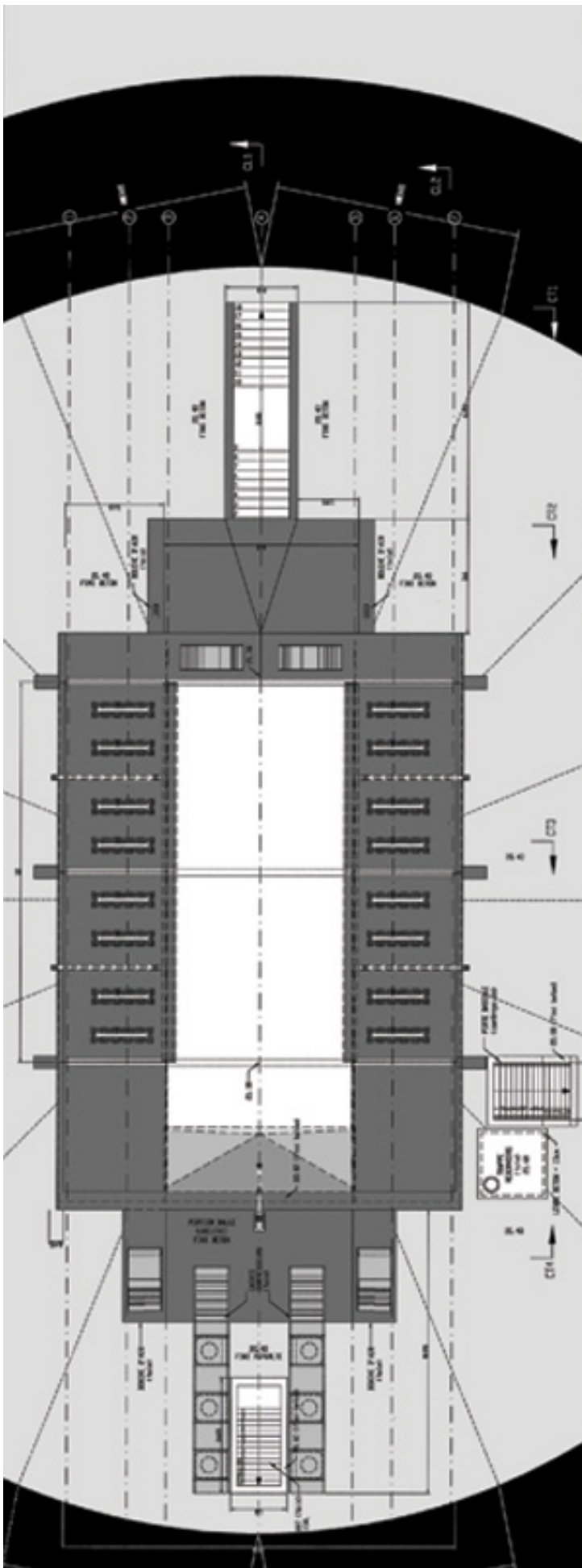


Figure 41. B018 plan, re-used bunker by Bernard Khoury

The crucial point in this case studies as reinterpretations and used as examples of objet trouvés, is not only the spatial intervention, but mainly the powerful functional intervention, the new meaning, the new way they have chosen to read these space. Going completely with rough and against a mass produced, war-related past, these projects choose to bring a new connotation to the bunker, giving a bigger message to the users and the people and the places they come from.

Figure 42. B019 bunker, exterior view, by Bernard Khoury

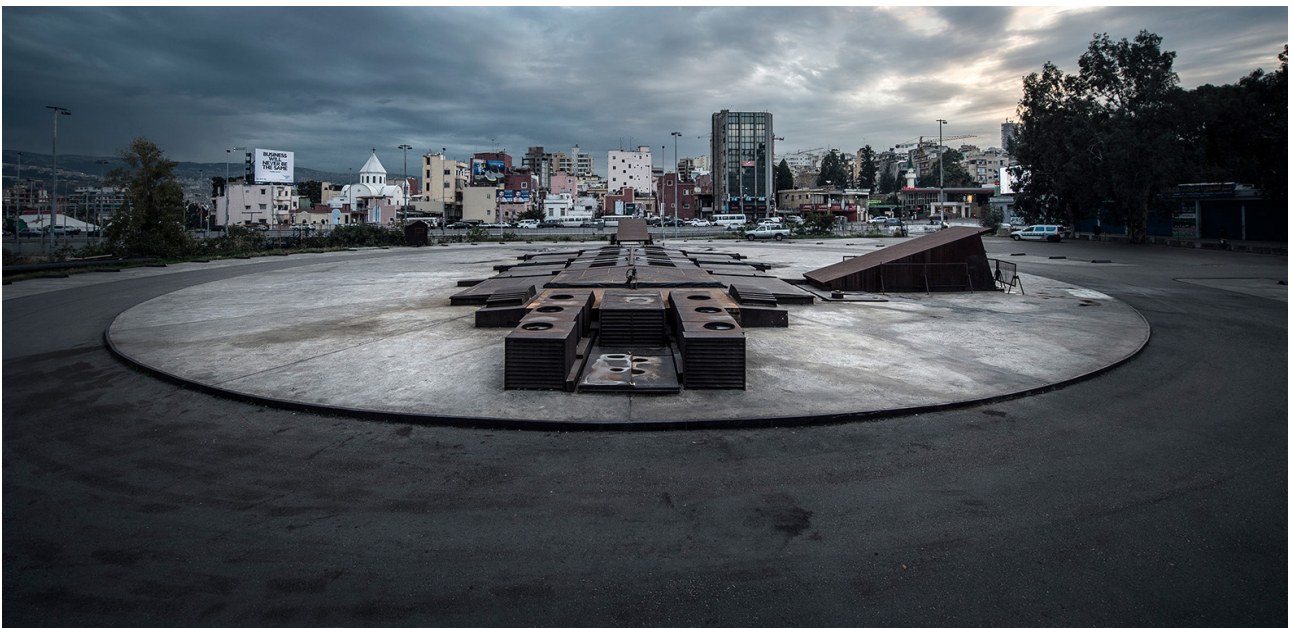
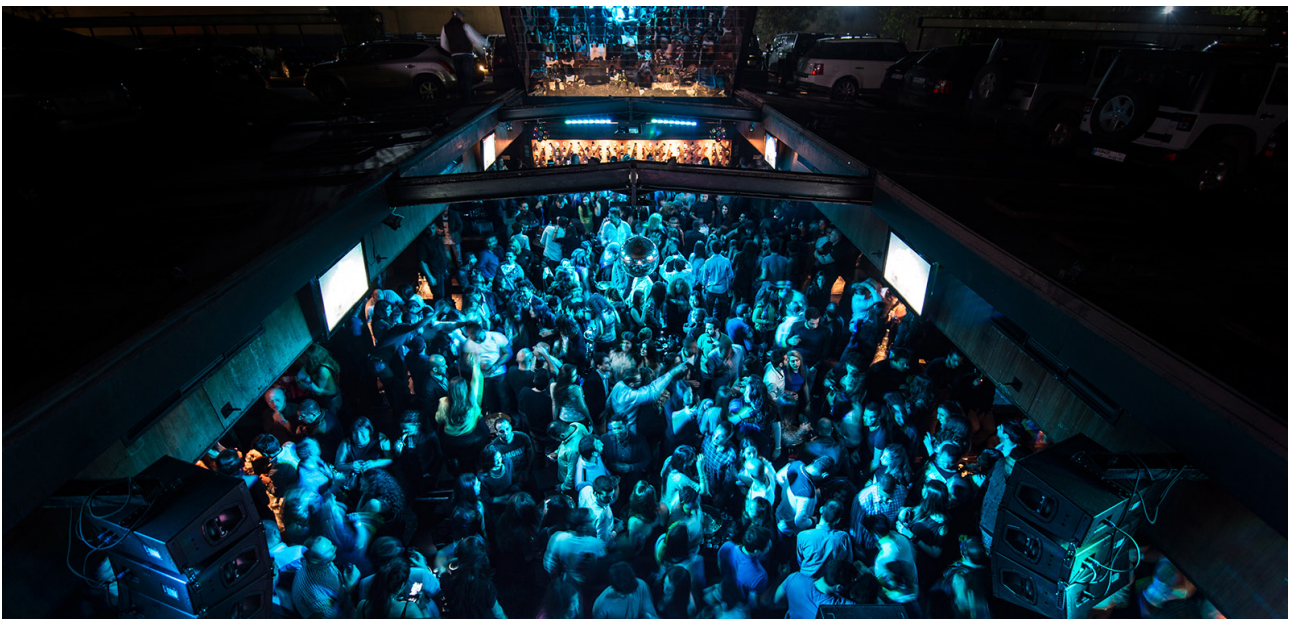


Figure 43. b019 bunker, exterior view, by Bernard Khoury



4. HEALING EPIPHANY

The Approach

The bunker and its history through years, not only in Albania, but in the whole territory of Europe it was built, and was explained also in the previous chapters, have shown that there is a common perception of it as mostly part of the past that still exists at the present. Sometimes it is necessary to see things with also an eye to their future. In the case of the Albanian Bunker it has been coexisting with its people for more than half a century now, but their awareness is only raised relating to it as a ruin basically. This also comes from the way the bunkers are treated until now in Albania, they have been used as part of this ruin porn movement, as something to get the excitement of foreigners and tourists to describe the past of the country they are visiting. This is a point a lot of bunkers are missing. It is not wrong to reuse them with these kind of purposes, but there should not be forgotten that the bunkers were built for the people of the country from the people of the country. Having an approach that reconnects the bunker to its citizen in the real present, can be the key point to help people reinterpret the bunker, not only as a remain of the past but as real part of their present and future. Also, in the Albanian territory this is very easy to be done, since the bunkers are located everywhere from the North to the South of country, from coastal beaches to highlands and hills and sometimes even in urban areas.

Reading the bunker in this way, coming back to the analysis of the current situation of perception the bunker is in, the anguish and trauma the bunker claims to the people of Albania is clear. At the same time it coexists to the people's contemporary, noisy life, as a static, quiet part

of their everyday life. A very interesting aspect is also the fact that the bunker not only in defensive but also in spatial terms, was built with the human scale in mind, highlighting the number of people that could join the space of a bunker. This although not in its first choice, gave to the bunker a kind of intimacy, combined with its concrete materiality. Considering the principles of the previously explained *objet trouve*, in this thesis is proposed a reinterpretation of the bunker as a healing space. That consists of this epiphany of the bunker's proximity to nature, solidity to the noisy chaotic life of the everyday Albanian, to the appeal of the moment of relaxation that can beguile everyone, at every age group despite the past relation to the bunker. Most importantly, this new reinterpretation will help the people see the bunkers differently, and not anymore as an archetype of past anguish, but as one of present healing.

*“Contemporary man, faced with the
abundance of consumer goods, needs
voids and nature”*

Mirko Zardini

To achieve the healing process as a new interpretation the bunkers as reinterpreted as two different kind of spaces:

- Meditation spaces
- Thermal Baths .

These kind of spaces are directly offering with their architectural features a healing process for the user and the proximity to nature also increases the degree of spirituality and reconciliation. There are some different aspects of these spaces, like light, materiality and relation to interior exterior, that can be explored from cases of architectural masterpieces from Peter Zumthor, a master in creating atmospheres, the artist James Turrell and his Skypace collection, and last but not least Tadao Ando's similar use of concrete in healing spaces, like meditation.

The use of light as a therapeutic practice & therapeutic experience and proximity to nature as a healing experience

The use of light in Peter Zumthor's architecture is very famous for the quality of architecture it brings. In the example of the Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, the big contrast of the roughness of the material with the small openings for the light to enter, give to it its actual meaning, its true value and that degree of the spirituality a chapel requires. These relations leading us to the level of intimacy, it refers to the various aspect- size, dimension, scale, masses and gravity of things. The closing insight-The light on things, tell us about the appearance of thing in light. Where and how the light fell.The nature of shadow, the way the surfaces were dull or sparkled or had their own depth. He describes the



Figure 44. Bruder Klaus Field Chapel by Peter Zumthor, skylight view



reflection of light from surfaces and ideas of planning light in a space as a medium of hollowing out the darkness from a mass and seeping inside.²⁹ Also in his project of the Thermal bathrooms, the combination of light, the proximity to nature and the sound of the water echoing inside the space, create the miracle of a healing and therapeutic space.

Whether diffused, pleasant, emotional, intellectual or even threatening, light is something James Turrell considers to be an essential nutrient — ‘almost like food’. The artist has spent his life studying and engaging with light and space, with a prolific body of work featured across the globe testing the limits human perception. “I want to create an atmosphere that can be consciously plumbed with seeing...like the wordless thought that comes from looking in a

29 Zumthor, Peter. *Atmospheres*, 2003.

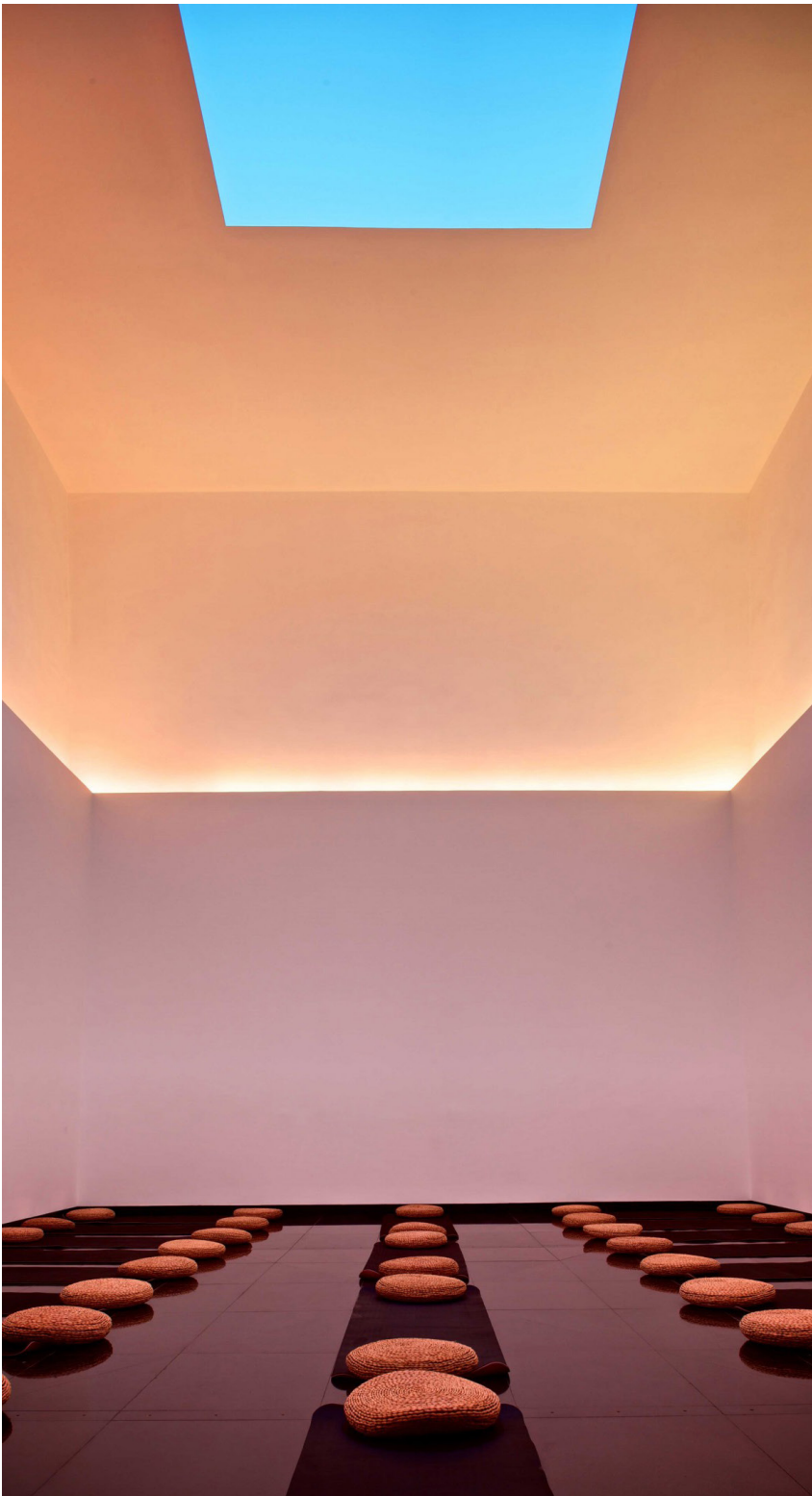
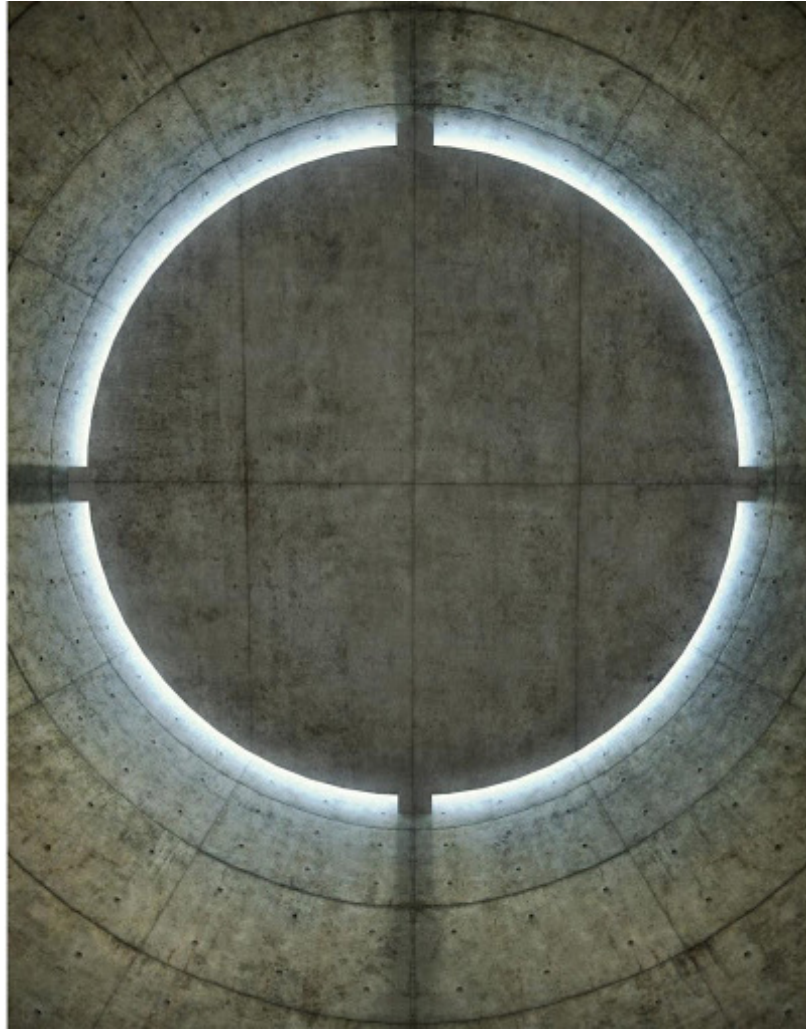


Figure 45. James Turrell, Skyspace series, <https://www.designboom.com/art/james-turrell-interview-light->



fire,” Turrell has said.³⁰

Tadao Ando designed the Meditation Space in this spirit, as a place where anyone – no matter their race or religion – can pause for a moment of quiet reflection. “The Meditation Space is an intense space of silence. There is something unclear and magic; it is a space full of emptiness.”³¹ The weight of the materiality and the scale of its emptiness creates this feeling of calm, protection, isolation, even overwhelming somehow, but also extremely free at the same time.

³⁰ “James Turrell.”

³¹ Tadao Ando Meditation Space Captured in Photos by Simone Bossi.”

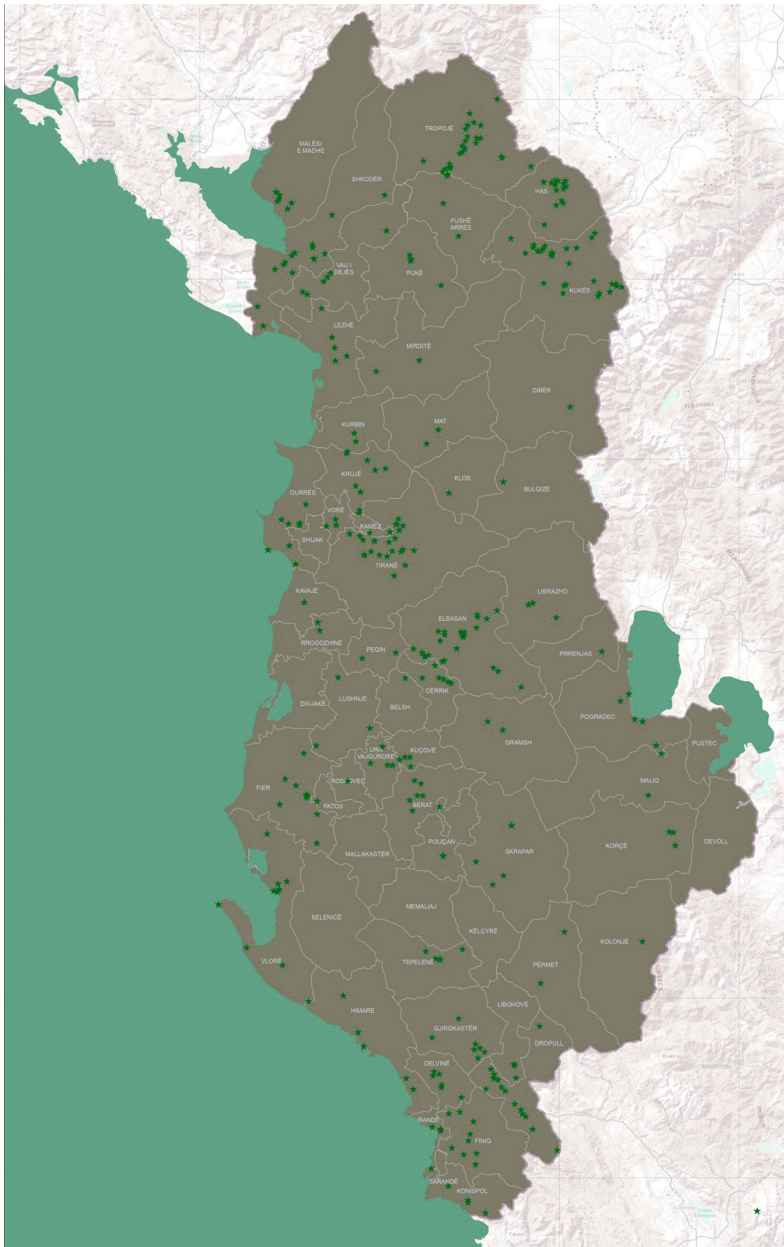


Figure 46. Meditation space by
Tadao Ando

The bunkers in Albania are located through out the whole territory of the country from highlands to the coast lines of the country and even in more central city locations, in urban settings. In the proposal of this thesis, the bunkers that are taken in consideration are those in highlands and coastal areas, near to nature, to the sea to create the complete healing atmosphere that the proposal requires. Also, in most cases the urban bunkers are located inside private lands, are destroyed or under destruction since they are in the middle of the city life, and even their location in the map is quite approximate related to the inner cities' parts.

In the Healing Bunkers project the proposal has in its main aim to treat the bunkers as objet trouve (found objects), which means that they are reinterpreted in their spatial terms, but with minimal intervention on their part. Another point is that the bunkers' structure is so massive and thick, that the modifications for a considerable number of them would be quite hard. The goal is to see how a reinterpretation of the bunker can give it new life and also make it more for the people.

The proposal has mainly the typologies proposed for activities like meditation and yoga and also thermal baths. In both cases the structure of the bunker is used as it is, using as access the main entrance of the bunker, the main window for more lighting and the central skylight is opened too, to offer a calming sense with the entrance of light. In the case of the thermal bath, the ground below the bunker is excavated to create different types of ramps or stairs and give the depth for the insertion of water.



It should be noticed that the combination of the space of the bunker and its new interpretation can be of various forms, here is presented a prototype, since the bunkers in most areas of the country are the same and with the same measurements.

Figure 47. Map with the location of the military bases in Albania, by A.Sula

In the yoga and meditation prototype, the bunker is mostly cleaned and can be equipped with maybe some sitting furniture, but in the most part of it it is a free space for the person to find themselves in whichever corner they need and want, to enjoy the passing of light, the calmness and the same time the proximity to the sea and the mountains, the nature of Albania, one of the treasures of the country.



Figure 48. Bunker as meditation proposal section





Figure 49. Bunker as meditation and yoga space proposal, view

In the thermal baths' prototypes the ground is excavated in a certain depth and combined with a stair or a ramp to make it easily accesible from the entrance and at the same time to offer different types of spaces inside the bunker. The lighting is also done the same way as in the previous example, especially with the sky-light. The combination of directed light, the sound of water through the thick walls of the bunker make a great place for relaxation and healing atmosphere for the user.

Figure 50. Bunker as thermal Bath proposal, plan and two sections, showing the prototype

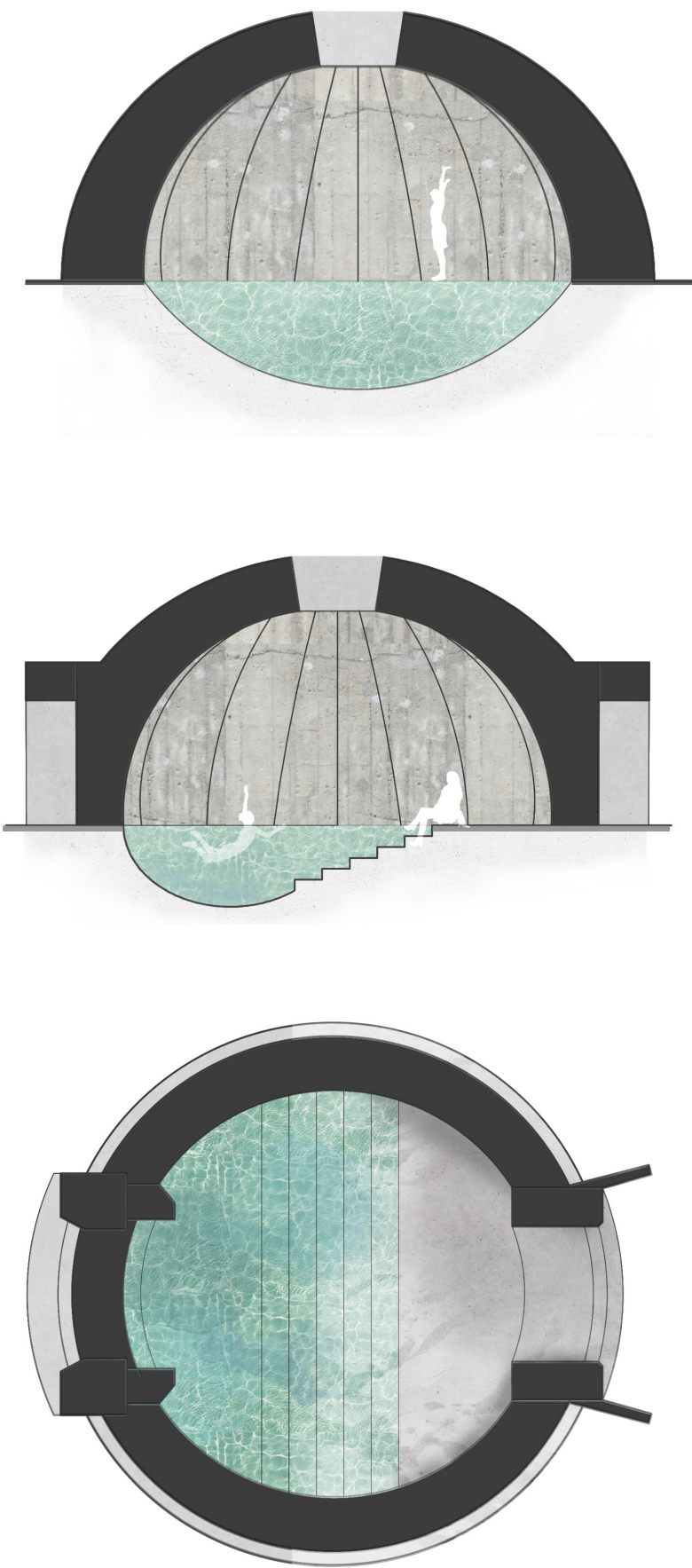




Figure 51. Bunker as Thermal Bath proposal, view

Another aspect, the proximity to the Albanian landscape is offered from the windows of the bunkers, having a range of views from hillsides, mountains and beautiful beaches. The sense of healing and relaxation is combined with the view, calmness and sounds of nature.



Figure 52. Bunker as meditation space
proposal, view



CONCLUSIONS

In the Albanian reality of today, the bunker, is an element that cannot be ignored even if it was intended too. It is found all across the country, from highlands and hillsides to lowest beach coasts and even in urban areas from time to time. Their existence is not only evident because of its physical and spatial features, but also because of the history it carries and represents. They came from a darker time for the country and for its unfortunate case or not, it is and will be somehow always related to it. As a symbol of the past to a lot of people the bunker is equal to the isolation the society was living in, the brutal governance of their dictator and his paranoia of outer attacks. Often, the history of their origin makes the bunker seem as it only came from the propaganda of the regime and had nothing to do with the country before. From analysing the past of the country though, even in centuries before the bunker's existence, the military character of defensive structure existed in the forms of castles and fortifications. The bunker is somehow just a new interpretation of that. But today, more than half a century after their existence and almost 30 years after the fall of that era, they are floating, figuratively of course, in the lands of the country with the big question of what they were and what they can be.

The bunker as a phenomenon in the Albanian context is so much more evident, not only because of its repetition in number, but also for the range of reactions it brings to people. To people who lived the regime it reflects the past, to people of younger generations it brings excitement and a kind of identification as an element that has always been present. So, there can be distinguished very clear that the bunker is stuck somehow in the middle of the past it carries and its present acknowledgement. As

it is interpreted in relation to the past in some cases the bunker is treated like a ruin and seen in a quite 'artistic' way as usually ruins with a certain history behind them are, or at least are tried to be presented like. In other cases the bunker has been commemorated as a part of the past, but in a more museological kind of way, presenting it as an attraction and interesting stop to see, rather than as a part of the formation of the history of the country and people. And in other cases, the people themselves have taken the bunker in their own hands, reusing it as they could.

This is one of the problems for the apprehension of the future of the bunker, the way it is presented today. It is represented as a ruin of the past, used to attract tourists and the appeal of foreigners and almost completely detached from its citizens in terms of coexistence to their space. The bunker, since the moment it was built despite its history though the way, was an architectural artefact built for the people of Albania, by them themselves. So, the idea of a bunker present not only physically by its concrete mass in the landscape, but at the same time present in the lives of the everyday users, can delineate its future, can educate future generations too and at the same time give to its architectural features the right interpretation.

Architecture is a discipline meant for people and done for them, so also the bunker should be portrayed in this way. Although, it comes from a time of mass production, the main relation of it is to human life, its protection, and its existence in the face of a threat. This relation to life and death, taken to sanctuary levels in cases of bunker-churches built by Paul Virilio and other architects, proves once again the close relation to human and its life perception. The Albanian bunker was also meant in scale very close to the human scale. By the principles of readymade objects,

where an object is reinterpreted with minimal intervention to its actual state, the bunker too is reinterpreted in this relation to life. Accompanied with the anguish and the past, to make the present-day bunker a readymade or an *objet trouve*, with a future, it should attack exactly this issue. Healing. And not only healing its own 'reputation' by a new reinterpretation, but also healing the contemporary man/woman in his/her mayhem of a life. This proximity to the personal level would help the understanding of the bunker from the people, and at the same time experiencing it.

It is crucial to understand that the bunker will always be a monolithic structure of defensive architecture, the aim is not to detach it from that or to create a new deluded present and future. The intention is to help clarify the ambiguity that such an object reflects, by annotating its architectural objective and subjective characteristics. The bunker mentality is a kind of fantasy that achieves the extremes of contradiction of emotions and motivations. But yet, the bizarre and astonishing personal quality level that this human scaled, mass constructed Albanian bunker has is a reminder of this appeal for the human element of architecture ,in even the most apparently brutal environment.

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